

Transcription of June 7, 2008 media availability

[0:00] GOV: Well, Mother Nature has landed another one on our chin, but we will get on top of this. We have a full compliment of state resources at the disposal of all the communities that have been affected so far, and I am advised that every request for local assistance has been met. We have elements of the State Police, INDOT, DNR obviously for water rescue and the National Guard already active. Other elements of the Guard are on standby and alert for deployment if needed. I guess we've even called on the assistance of our visiting Marines. I've declared an emergency declaration—a state emergency—beginning with Johnson and Morgan counties. In particular, this means that if the engineers decide that immediate action needs to be taken to relieve the pressure at the dams in Johnson County we can do this without the need to consult anybody. I wanted to make certain that if swift action is necessary to protect life or property it happens as fast as possible.

[1:39] GOV: To this point, mercifully, we believe that all Hoosiers are secure. We hope that will continue. We have more rain falling and we may have a situation in which the flood waters subside in a few hours, but then are susceptible to rising again if rain falls to the north and more water is pushed down the Wabash and other rivers. I'm told to expect that the worst flooded areas may see some cresting in the next four or five hours, then we'll see what we've got.

[2:27] Question: There seems to be some questions as to whether some counties had declared a state of emergency. Should there be some sort of statewide standard used for a declaration of emergency, is that something we should be looking at?

[2:43] GOV: Maybe in retrospect. Right now the focus is on public safety and dealing with the damage we've had. We've got a pretty good system—a nationally recognized system—and it starts with local decision making. So we'll, as always, after any event, look back and see what we can learn from it.

[3:03] Question: On the south side [of Indianapolis], you mentioned the Johnson and Morgan Counties, but I guess the Mayor surveyed the south side today. Have you been down there at all? I understand there is sandbagging going on down there?

[3:19] GOV: There is sandbagging going on all over the place. What I've seen first hand is dozens of photographs taken by our people—that's as close as I've been. I also want to add that obviously anyone needing assistance call your emergency response number immediately, but those who don't, it would be very helpful if you would stay off the roads and off the phones. Please don't call for information, listen to your media for that. There's been some congestion both of traffic and telephone traffic in a few places. While it's natural enough, we would ask everyone to cooperate and only use that infrastructure if you have to.

[4:04] Question: [Regarding the Governor's opinion of the most severe damage thus far]

[4:13] GOV: In the immediate area, we're worried about the private dams in Johnson County, some of which have already been breached. But I would say that some of the worst potential

damage I've seen is west of here ranging all the way over to Terre Haute and West Terre Haute. Again, if more water comes down from the north, we may have not seen the worst of it.

[4:43] Question: [Regarding how the state will be dealing, logistically, with the recent natural disasters]

[4:56] GOV: We'll manage. We've got the best people I believe anywhere for these types of things. We have a very well integrated system. I'll tell you again that I am very pleased with the way in which we are operating under a unitary command and all the necessary departments are acting very cooperatively with each other. I think we have both the logistics and the financial resources to deal with it. I'd had rather it hadn't happened, but...

[6:43] Question: [Regarding potential fatalities/injuries caused by people disregarding barricades]

[6:53] GOV: We just hope everyone will use common sense, which means first of all, just stay off the road altogether if you can avoid it. Obviously, never attempt to traverse water, let alone moving water. If everyone will be very, very careful and cautious about that, we will get through this.

[7:24] Question: [Regarding the Governor's overall view of the scope of the storms]

[7:33] GOV: It's too soon to tell you that. In particular regarding flooding, it's not always the immediate impact but sometimes, as I just mentioned, we may still see the worst of it a day or two from now depending on what the weather brings and where.

[10:43] Question: Has the worst past?

[10:47] GOV: I think we have learned throughout the last week to ten days to never assume the worst has past. Once again if it will stop raining I am advised we'll see within hours some receding of the waters—let's just hope that's the case. But rain has begun or resumed up to the north and we have learned in the past you have to keep an eye on that because it runs downhill, so to speak, and downhill are the areas we are suffering in right now.

[11:24] Question: What about shelters?

[11:26] GOV: National Guard Armories are one possibility; it's our principle recommendation right now.

Alright. We'll have more as we know it. Thank you very much.